INGRES

CAPITA
SOFTWARE SERVICES

Customer
Capita Software Services

Industry
Software Development for
Local Government

Challenge
Make a broad range of local
government services
available electronically

Solution
Ingres Database
Ingres OpenROAD

Benefits
Short development learning
curve for faster application
time-to-market

Fast conversion of legacy
systems

Ease of management by
end users

Improved service at lower
cost

Capita Software Rules the United Kingdom's eGovernment Market with Ingres Open Source

HIGHLIGHTS

Dealing with local government agencies can be a frustrating experience for anyone – but with the help of Ingres, Capita Software Services has made it a lot easier for constituents throughout the United Kingdom. By using Ingres to build cost-effective, easy-to-maintain eGovernment applications for nearly 400 local councils across the United Kingdom, Capita has made the full menu of government services available online. These leading-edge solutions have not only transformed the way agencies interact with citizens nationwide – they've also made Capita a leader in the UK's eGovernment market.

CHALLENGE

Software solutions developer Capita Software Services needed a way to build robust eGovernment applications quickly and cost-effectively. The company was responding to a challenge issued by the government of the United Kingdom for its nearly 400 local authorities to make their entire menu of services – from housing and street lighting to schools and emergency planning – available electronically. While many local councils had already been exploring ways in which Information Communication Technology (ICT) could enable them to work smarter and more efficiently, the mandate's tight deadline brought increased urgency and focus to the project. The scope of the eGovernment agenda made it inevitable and desirable for private companies to play a major role – and Capita was determined to make the most of the opportunity.

Already active in the local authority arena, Capita was well-positioned to contend for the coming wave of contracts. Still, the requirements posed a considerable challenge: Capita would have to build and deploy robust eGovernment applications, including the migration of legacy data, while working within a tight timeframe and budget. The applications had to be simple to use and cost-effective to manage while enabling local authorities to deliver a higher level of service at lower cost than ever before.

SOLUTION

Capita's choice of technology for the eGovernment initiative was simple. The company relies on Ingres database technology and development tools to power many of its products for the local government market. Alex Cutler, technical director of Capita Software Services, cites the deep

respect he shares with his colleagues for the fundamental elegance and strength of Ingres Database, a leading open source database for business-critical applications, and its Ingres OpenROAD development environment.

"From the developer's viewpoint, the combination of Ingres Database and Ingres OpenROAD is a boon," says Cutler. "The focus on the Ingres database being an excellent, powerful production quality SQL database rather than a whole operating system gives Ingres a unique clarity which our developers find very easy to pick up and write good code for. Ingres OpenROAD has an unusually short learning curve for developers, and as a dedicated database language, is a highly efficient tool for database heavy applications."

Capita's three platforms of choice are Microsoft Windows, Sun Solaris, and Linux. Cutler reveals that Ingres OpenROAD makes it easier to deliver a solution for both UNIX and Windows that is totally focused on the database. It also supports fast conversion of legacy systems from any database – hierarchical, relational, object or even flat file – to Capita applications. "It's consistently given us a lead on the competition," he says.

The ease with which Ingres can be managed by end-users is another key advantage, given the emphasis of the eGovernment program on enabling councils to provide better services for less cost. Says Cutler, "Ingres makes it easy for us to design applications that do not require dedicated system administrators to be resident on customer sites. That means we're able to show a real cost of ownership advantage."

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Results

Ingres enabled Capita to rapidly expand its eGovernment market share with new solutions for revenues, benefits, payment management, and integrated housing management systems. To date, the company boasts more than 500 installations in local UK government and housing associations. Says Cutler of Capita's choice of Ingres technology, "It's a decision that has helped us come from fifth place in the market during 1994 to the number one supplier today, and never given us cause for regret. Our customers' number one concern is whether we can give them a reliable product or service and because we have vast experience with Ingres, and a long history of reliability and proof of production-quality, we can be confident in our ability to deliver on our promises."

The impact of Capita's Ingres-powered eGovernment solutions is exemplified by its Academy Benefits application. As the market-leading product in its sector and in use at many of the largest local authorities in the United Kingdom, Academy Benefits automates the calculation, distribution, and administration of public fund financial help to needy citizens with rent and other essentials. Written in Ingres OpenROAD, the solution supports both public Web access and middle-tier transactions to CRM systems, and provides a highly comprehensive business application that enables councils to speed the delivery of services. Ingres has enabled Capita to build system administration entirely into the application itself, allowing non-technical council staff to take direct control of their process.

Another Capita solution helped Elmbridge Borough Council in England cope with the forced retirement of a legacy system used to handle the administration and collection of local taxes from some 55,000 homes and businesses – a challenge made still more daunting by a withdrawal of support by the supplier of its aging VME hardware. Capita installed its Academy suite on a new SUN V440 Solaris system, integrating it with the council's finance systems. An extensive data mapping exercise then transferred live mid-year and historical data to Ingres Database using Ingres OpenROAD. High-quality data conversion sped time-to-market, and users were soon discovering the power and ease of use of the new Windows-based applications. Reporting proved a major contrast, eliminating the cumbersome batch processing and constant IT staff involvement of the VME system and enabling users to define and print new reports on demand. With the Capita-Ingres solution in place, the council has reduced operational costs, simplified its support arrangements, and accelerated its achievement of eGovernment projects.

About Ingres Corporation

Ingres Corporation is a leading provider of open source database management software and support services. Ingres powers customer success with the flexibility, cost savings, and innovation that are hallmarks of an open source deployment. Ingres supports its customers with a vibrant community and world class support, globally. Based in Redwood City, California, Ingres has major development, sales, and support centers throughout the world, and more than 10,000 customers in the United States and internationally. For more information, visit www.ingres.com.

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